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RUGBY LEAGUE COACHING MANUALS

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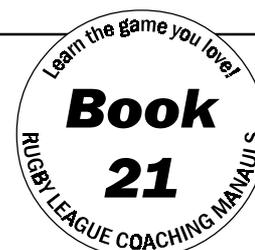
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Coach Talk

GRAHAM MURRAY - Head Coach Sydney Roosters RLFC

Graham Murray is widely recognised within Rugby League circles as a team builder, with the inherent ability to draw the best out of his player's week in and week out. Murray has achieved success at all levels of coaching. He led Penrith to a Reserve Grade Premiership in 1987; took Illawarra to a major semi-final and Tooheys Challenge Cup victory in 1992; coached the Hunter Mariners to an unlikely World Club Challenge final berth in 1997; was the brains behind Leeds' English Super League triumph in 1999; and more recently oversaw the Sydney Roosters go within a whisker of notching their first premiership in 25 years. Being named 'Dally M' coach of the year in 1992 is yet another coaching accolade for Murray. His remarkable success at such an assortment of clubs illustrates his rare capacity of uniting individuals into a formidable team.

*Murray also enjoyed a fruitful playing career chalking up 87 career First Grade games for Parramatta and Souths. He also skippered the Eels' Reserve Grade side to premierships in 1977 and 1979. **RLCM** talked to Murray recently to ask about his recipe for success, as well as his thoughts on Rugby League in the 21st century.*

How has full-time professionalism changed players? It's a lot different to yesteryear when they combined work commitments with football isn't it?

You have to tell the players about the importance of turning up on time and wearing the right uniforms and behaving in a team environment. When you went to work you learnt that pretty quickly because the bosses wouldn't put up with lateness or inappropriate attire. In those days Rugby League was in the evenings and you had a bit of leniency for the players because you knew they had worked hard in the pits all day, and were lucky to have them there. Nowadays you have got to emphasise that it is important to be punctual, it is important to be dressed properly and polite. I think one of my coaching staff in Leeds said once, 'my time is the same price as your time and your time is the same price as the next blokes time.' So if somebody gets held up for five minutes, or the team gets held up because of someone for five minutes then you have to times that by 13 which equates to 65 minutes being wasted.

The players get too much idle time, and combining that with more money can be a deadly mix. At the Roosters, we try to fill in a lot of their time. But they don't want to be with you the whole time so you just try and find the balance. You can't train them eight hours a day. They're human beings they just can't take it. We do weights in the morning and running in

the afternoon, but you have got to allow the players down time so their bodies can recover.

Your coaching philosophy...

My philosophy is to enjoy myself wherever I live and wherever I coach. I think I've always enjoyed myself wherever I have been. I loved it at Penrith, I loved it at Wollongong, Newcastle, Leeds, and now Sydney. I had a great time when I captain-coached in Lismore as well. When I first meet my players with a new club I always say 'I'm going to enjoy this, if you want to enjoy this you better get on the bus with me.' That is what it's all about. If we are not enjoying ourselves then we are not going to be very productive as a group. Having said that, you can't be jokers all week you have to know when to switch on and switch off.

Has a coach's role changed?

Definitely, and that is why I think you need an assistant coach. I never thought I would, but I wouldn't work without one now. An assistant can dovetail everything that you do, and things you might miss he can pick up. If I'm a bit cranky he can be the nice guy, when you are the nice guy he can be a bit cranky, so that person is a very important to your club. Grant Jones is my assistant here at the Roosters and he is perfect for the role. There is so much that you have to do with the players.

Your strengths as a coach...

I think I'm easy to get on with. Having said that, I will never dodge dropping a player who I don't think has performed well. I get on with most people and my door is always open. I think one of the things I seem to be able to do is generate good team spirit which goes back to enjoying myself.

Good team spirit is vital isn't it?

You have got 28 people and you're putting them in a room and saying 'you are going to spend the better part of eight months with each other and all of you are to be best friends,' there is a lot of hard work there. They're all from different walks of life and you have got to make sacrifices. You just can't walk in and say this is me and this is the way it's going to be for me. It has to be for us, the team. I usually say to players when we first meet 'if you really want to be a selfish bugger and just think about yourself you should have taken up an individual sport like golf, singles tennis or boxing. But here you have collectively chosen Rugby League which is a team sport and you can't get away from it, we are a team sport and we have got to be operating as a team.'

After the game...

In the first two days after a game I think there should be a lot of down time. I think you have got to let the person physically and mentally relax and get over that last encounter. So, early in the week has got to be fairly low key, we have a swim on Monday and then have lunch together, then we might have an activity in the afternoon. Apart from that I don't ask them to do anything. We don't speak about the previous game at this time. Some people say you should address it the next day, but I still think the players need the down time. On Tuesdays we do weights, have lunch together and then assess the weekend's game. We then have Wednesday's off, so the first three days are pretty low key and I think the players need it, I really do.

How do you motivate the players week after week?

I remember years ago I was at North Sydney Oval and I was walking down the steps to the game. At that time I was coaching Second Grade. The Under 23's were about to go on and I walked past the North Sydney shed and they had *Rocky 2* running. I remember thinking, 'they are fired up'. Then I went to our shed and they had *Rocky 3* going. I said to the players 'don't think I'm okaying *Rocky* movies for motivation every week. It is all about motivation of the inner self. I will talk to you and I'll get us ready but I can't physically take you and put you on the rack and say I want you to remain focused.'

What type of drills work do you do?

These days you have left hand side and right hand side, so we have the left-hand side versus the right-hand side which is a good exercise. I think that is what you have to do, you have got to try and make it fairly game like. And the players will tell you too that they like those types of drills. It is reactive, and they are being put under pressure. But having said that, in your drills and skills you have got to work into something. You start off with no opposition and then you work with a couple of pads against four players and then you might work eight on eight. So you can't be doing something that is very physically demanding straight away, you have got to determine what you are trying to achieve.

How do you re-build the confidence of a dropped player?

Everyone is disappointed when they get dropped to Second Grade and they all treat it differently. It is just a matter of opening the lines of communication. I will always say hello to a bloke I've dropped even if I have nothing really constructive to say to him.

How do you go about winning the battle of the ruck?

I think if your defence is in order you will win the ruck. I think you have just got to be aggressive in defence and make sure the opposition earns every inch of ground.

Where do you generally want your 5th tackle kicks to go?

Over the fullbacks head. If we achieve that then it opens up the possibility of trapping him in the in-goal area. If we can't he is going to be just inside the field of play which means his teammates have to come right back to the goal line to help him out.

What is the major difference between the English and Australian games?

I reckon the top five sides are good in England and when those sides play each other it is a good battle. At their home ground they probably won and at your home ground you probably won, that is how close it was. With the bottom nine teams you knew you had a win which means most British players aren't conditioned to playing tough matches every week. I think those soft games is where they falldown. In the NRL no one knows who is going to win. There is no doubt that in the top 20 British players there is some very skilful footballers, and they will win the odd Test match against Australia, but they just will not be able to back it up and win a Series. They just haven't experienced week in week out tough football.

The Need for Innovators & Creativity in Rugby League

Written by Robert Rachow

Source of information - Queensland Rugby League Coaching Camp, Gatton 2001
Level 2 Lectures By Dennis Ward & Don Oxenham

Sports coaching and freedom of thought can often appear as two mutually exclusive entities. After all, isn't coaching all about a sequential chain of popular teachings? A mentor passes on instructions to a variety of coaches, who then impart that same information on senior athletes, who in turn pass it onto the less experienced athletes.

Well in many cases that has been - and still is - the way coaching systems are handled. Importantly though, if you take a look at any successful or forward-thinking development program, rigidity is not a common theme.

To take a phrase from contemporary language, sports coaching has become all about "breaking free of the Matrix". Indeed Rugby League and popular sci-fi movie *The Matrix* have far more in common than the mere fact that a great deal of their respective action takes place in Sydney. The movie's catchphrase of "remove the blindfold on humanity" and subsequent themes are all transposable to the 13-man game.

Everyday life is full of copycats and followers who live out the thoughts of others, all the while conforming to a supposed set of standards. It is a lifestyle of comfort that offers very few lows. Yet despite its popularity, there is an alarming scarceness in the number of people who arise from such an existence to further or enlighten the plight of mankind. In Rugby League this can be seen from season to season. Players and coaches will think in a predetermined way so as to climb the ladder in a consistent fashion. But the number of which leave a lasting impression on the game is relatively minute.

Compare this to those people who take control of their own thoughts and actions, often riding out incredible lows before receiving any reward. In some cases this may involve ignoring the advice or opinions of figureheads traditionally viewed as more intelligent. Both Albert Einstein and Salvadore Dali were dismissed by teachers as 'dreamers' in their formative years, while Michael Jordan was kicked off his High

School basketball team. For others, recognition had to wait even longer. Van Gogh and Mozart were well into the afterworld before popular culture realised their genius.

Just as Keanu Reeve's *Matrix* character Thomas Anderson derived his ultimate power from thinking outside the square, so must Rugby League coaches. Over the last twenty years, Australia has seen coaches the calibre of Jack Gibson, Warren Ryan and Wayne Bennett emerge at the forefront of premiership winning teams. This isn't by chance or because they are the three that best fit society's label of 'intellectual'. It is because all of the trio dared to defy convention and formulated ideas which negated traditional strategies, rather than beat them face-to-face.

WHY WE NEED INNOVATORS IN RUGBY LEAGUE

None of the current NRL coaches bare any resemblance to *Matrix* sage Morpheus - in fact a few would probably admit to looking more like Jedi master Yoda. However their message is one and the same - that people are solely responsible for the mental confines they work within.

Freedom of thought is clearly the directive, but why is it of such value to Rugby League?

The is a persuasive argument that the success of former Australian and Queensland halfback Allan Langer was largely due to the combination of him coming from an innovative background and then spending the majority of his career under an innovative coach (in Wayne Bennett). Langer was neither the biggest, strongest, fittest or fastest of players - attributes commonly expected of champion League players. Instead his rise to the top was characterised by an array of self-taught skills that conventional tactics could not control. And when it came to his greatest weakness - tackling - Langer devised a strategy that ultimately forced the game's controlling body to change the rules.

Many will argue his style was unsportsmanlike, but history will show two things. Firstly, he was given free reign by his coach to use it and secondly, it was greatly effective. In Langer's case it was a rare case of two like-minded people coming together, in himself and Bennett. But even without a star player like 'Alf', the importance of a coach's innovation to the game as a whole is paramount. In the last few decades Rugby League has seen defensive tactics such as 'turtling' and moving the five-eighth or centre up to the scrum and dropping the number 7 back when conceding the feed. In attack there has been the 'mouse trap' play from dummy half and the largest forward taking a hit-up off the scrum rather than using the backs. These examples have had various degrees of success and longevity, but noticeably they have all changed the face of the game.

The belief among the coaching fraternity is that innovation serves several purposes towards the betterment of Rugby League. It makes sure rules are constantly updated and improved, it demands greater athletes, it helps avoid monopolisation and most importantly, it keeps the viewing public interested.

"Innovation stops us coaches from doing the same old, same old," explains Parrammatta head coach Brian Smith, one of modern-day League's most creative thinkers.

"Without it, sport wouldn't be as exciting to watch. The more creative and the more educated coaches become, the harder each of us has to work. It's a cyclical process. You hear this saying of 'Going back to the drawing board', but sometimes you need to change the drawing board or get rid of it all together."

Another view is that creativity, besides its on-field benefits, also holds tangible goodwill in terms of luring juniors and supporters to the grassroots levels. Essentially each and every coach is a salesperson for the game. Thinking coaches will inevitably attract more interest than following coaches, because their dynamism and ingenuity is vastly appealing. Players like to have a sense of individualism and it creates a sense of synergy if they see their coach employing the same attitude.

There is an old axiom that says the goal of a coach is to make themselves obsolete. What this means is that if a coach imparts his philosophies with sufficient mastery, the players will mould together in a manner that removes the need for external supervision. It is a somewhat Utopian concept, yet it presents an interesting model - the prevalence of widely innovative children who have been attracted to and succeeded peerlessly in Rugby League, because of the guidance of coaches stressing freedom of thought.

WHAT PREVENTS PEOPLE FROM BEING CREATIVE?

Naturally if innovation were so easy, it would not be such a special quality. As was stated before, society has bred generations of people with their lives mapped out from an early age. Changing direction on this path can commonly cause heartbreak and both physical and mental pain before any rewards are met. Not only is it the innovator who is effected either. There will be people close to the innovator whose lifestyles and concepts will resist change and favour familiarity. Then there will be people at the other end of the spectrum that stand to lose some form of standing as a result of innovation and will oppose it forcibly. So more often than not, potential innovators will choose to stick with convention out of respect to those close to them and fear of those that oppose them.

Common theory estimates that 99 per cent of ideas in everyday life are rejected. It is an alarmingly high statistic, but when you look at those who hold power in society, this figure is explanatory. Those at the top of the ladder have arrived there through strategies or concepts that are almost half a century old. While adaptability is a key to them remaining successful, most of their basic ideals will be ingrained from their formative years.

If we were to parallel this to Rugby League, club administration would be the most obvious example. Such is the changing face of League in regards to on-field rules and off-field business, that the hierarchy are frequently caught clinging to outdated ideologies. This occurs at all Levels of the game.

For the benefit of League's progression, it is encouraged that all people involved approach decisions with a clean slate as opposed to bias or popular opinion. Understandably the hardest difficulty is not so much listening to new ideas, but removing the old ones. After 40-50 years, perception can be so deeply ingrained that it shackles you from seeing the benefits that others might so clearly see.

Quite often there is also a deep fear of failure or perhaps even a fear of courage.

This last statement may sound particularly puzzling, for indeed 'fear of courage' is a contradictory term, at least in the literary sense. What it purports to is a characteristic well inbred in Australian culture - the reluctance to look like a lair, a smart ass, a show pony. Few terms in the Aussie lexicon are more derogatory, for from a young age it is melded into children's psyche that upstaging others and doing things differently is anything but a badge of honour.

“I think it is something that is particularly sad in Australian sport,” says Brian Smith.

“Anyone that shows a bit of ingenuity is castigated. I think the media encourage that negativity to an extent. So people don’t put their neck out for the fear they will earn somebody’s wrath.

“I have had players who have given me great ideas, but they would rather I take the credit for it, because they don’t want to be seen as an ‘intellect’ by their peers.”

Linking this back to the Matrix once more, when Thomas Anderson’s boss says “You have a problem with authority. You think you are special and the rules don’t apply to you”, he perfectly captures the negativity commonly placed on individualism. Call it an extension of the tall poppy syndrome or whatever, but it has become a worrying phenomenon particularly with adolescent males - the very same people League needs to be its next innovators.

SYSTEMS THAT ENCOURAGE INNOVATION

Discovering what processes nourish creativity is a topic of ongoing debate. Popularising individualism becomes a self-defeating exercise, so there is a constant shift in what is considered innovative thought and what is considered conventional. However, at least one thing appears to be clear. Genius cannot be nurtured through competitive examination - that is merely a standard of conformity.

One theory is that the inclination to be innovative comes as a direct result of how much self-confidence an individual possesses.

People that walk around as creative entrepreneurs; people where the world explodes with ideas, are most likely encouraged by innovation because they have a lot of security, whether that be in materialistic or psychological form. If they take a risk, they are confident of still falling on their feet at the end of the day. Although those who are successful probably attained a fair degree of their status through always being more receptive of ideas, it does appear that people are more open to innovation once they attain a fair level of confidence.

Of course not all of humanity can simply become millionaires in the quest for a bit of self-confidence. What can be done though, is to mimic certain characteristics of the environment from which such people arise and mentally implant those concepts.

BREEDING CONFIDENCE IN RUGBY LEAGUE PLAYERS

It is argued there are six components that can be used to breed confidence - success, experience, responsibility, recognition, autonomy and status. All of these traits have avenues of implementation in Rugby League.

With success and experience, it is a matter of achieving a delicate balance to nurture the growth of the individual. A player must feel they are competent enough at a particular level before attempting to conquer the next one. This is applicable to fitness regimes, skill drills or even moving from one grade up to the next. At the same time though, holding players back for too long can stunt their development and give them an obscured view of what expectations have been placed upon them. Essentially the aim is to create an environment that provides a fairly constant level of success with ongoing developmental experience.

Responsibility comes in many forms. It may be as obvious as making somebody captain or it could mean emphasising the importance of a certain position to the team. For example, the coach could stress how integral the winger’s kick return is to setting up the next attacking possession. Obviously this wouldn’t be enforced to the point of being a burden, but just enough to give the player a sense of importance within the team.

Recognition also lends itself to various modes of use. Quite often a heartfelt acknowledgment in front of teammates or parents can mean as much to a player as receiving a trophy at the end-of-year presentations. Factors such as timing, sincerity and personality of the player should all be taken into consideration to give the greatest impact.

One subtle way of encouraging confidence and, in turn, innovative play, is to have an unspoken rule of autonomy. This could apply to the whole team or just to certain individuals within the side. If there is a talented player who makes those around him/her better, than a mutual understanding of free reign can benefit the whole team. However stating this aloud could cause a number of problems. It may make teammates either resentful or overawed and it may also trigger the player to try things which aren’t within their usual character. Some players tend to feel more respected and confident of their role if it is not explained to them anyway. Autonomy is about what is not said, just as much as it is about what is said, if not more so.

Finding The Edge

With **STEVE ANDERSON** - Leeds Performance Director RLFC

Written by David Haynes

For Steve Anderson Leeds' newly appointed Performance Director, Rugby League is an individual game. His primary role at previous clubs, Gold Coast Seagulls and Melbourne, has been to oversee the individual components of players' games in order to maximise the team's on-field performance. Anderson's proudest moments therefore, extend further than the Storm's epic 1999 Grand Final win.

Speak to him and you soon realise that some of his finest memories in Rugby League have been educating players and seeing them attain personal goals. Matt Rua and Russell Bawden are perfect examples. He talks fondly of Rua and the targets set by the pair which went part of the way to seeing Rua reach the heights of International football 18-months after crossing paths with each other. Bawden's another after achieving his long-term goal of playing State of Origin football. He simply asked Anderson 'what he had to do to get there,' and with constant consultation things snowballed.

"My focus has always been the individual," Anderson said. "I'm more attuned to isolating the individual and understanding their characteristics and make-up in order to get the performance. At this level if you look at the physical components of the game, the skill attributes of the player and the fitness levels of the player virtually cancel each other out. So all we're looking for at this level is an edge."

According to Anderson that mental edge comes from a continuous education cycle. "You have to educate players not just about the physical toll of League but also the emotional side of the game," he said. "It is the emotional levels on gameday which come down to a win or a loss because the skill side is virtually nullified." In essence, Anderson's work is understanding why a player dropped a crucial pass or had a momentary lapse in defence and then rectifying the problem with remedial work.

"Each week the players get the video of their game, and I set three or four targets for each player," he said. "For example Aaron Moule's target might be width in defence. He's practised it all week because it was a remedial area from the previous game. I've had him out there doing defence type activities that simulate

the failure in the game and also where he should be, we put him in that situation."

Anderson finds game-related drills beneficial in measuring 'how a player reacts in certain situations.' "The only way you can handle panic and pressure is to have been in the situation before so you can draw on your experiences," he said.

Anderson stresses that it is imperative players can 'understand the benefit and use of skill and drill practise to game situations.' He educates the players to understand "that it's not me telling you, I need you to be on the same wavelength as me," he said. "If I'm seeing that you haven't got width in defence I want you to see the same thing...I'm getting them involved in the coaching process."

As Anderson explains, if a player doesn't grasp a concept at training it will more often than not show on gameday. To help the players, each week Anderson will put a series of cues up in the dressing shed. Patience, Control and Confidence are cues he used regularly at the Storm. "Patience, control and confidence can mean a whole heap of different things to each individual player," he said. "Even though they are general terms, I've got the players educated to know that confidence for Aaron Moule means this, because over the last two years Steve has spoken to me about my lack of confidence in this particular component of my game. Confidence to Robbie Kearns means something completely unique to the nature of his game. So even though they're general cues it means specifics for each player. Without the education process, which I've had with them, it means nothing," he said.

Anderson was fortunate in that the Storm had been able to retain the nucleus of their player roster, allowing for a mostly progressive educational process. However, even when new players enter the fold Anderson was able to integrate them easily. "It's about teaching the players all the time," he said. "It's about revising and revisiting what you have done. I still cover the same areas with the newcomers as I would for the more experienced players. Everything about our environment is learning. We create tasks in the sessions that they're learning from all the time."

Some Basic Principles In Defence & Attack

By **SHANE Mc NALLY** - Northern Territory Institute of Sport Coaching Director

Rugby League can be a simple game if the basic principles are understood. These principles may differ from coach to coach but it is important that players know what the coach wants and how he expects them to play. Northern Territory Institute of Sport Coaching Director Shane McNally has taken the step of putting his attack and defence principles on paper so his players have a clear understanding of the basics which he expects from them. These principles may not suit all teams and coaching styles but the importance is to open the communication and educate the players on the basics so as to build a solid platform that they can take into every game.

McNally passed the following principles onto his players for the 2001 season.

DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

Marker Defence

The role of the first marker is to hold position until the ball is passed or the dummy half runs and then to chase out towards the ball carrier to effect the tackle. The first marker should continue to chase until the next tackle is completed.

The role of the second marker is to hold the middle and cover the inside of the first marker's area. As the defensive line moves forward this player fills in the gap between the two post defenders always pushing towards the ball.

Defensive Line

Every player in the line must go forward as the ball is played. The first objectives are to cut off the ball and to put the ball carrier on the ground. In the event of the ball getting past your man on the outside you must then angle towards the ball, covering for the inside runner and/or pass. If your man runs across field he is your man until such time he crosses another attacking player.

Communication in the defensive line is of paramount importance. Give as much information to your team mates as possible. Say whom you have got and what your intended actions will be.

Work hard 'off the ball' and always put yourself in a position where you can make a tackle. That is chase and recover quickly on all plays. Always anticipate what the opposition will and might do so that you are already in position to effect the tackle when it happens.

Wingers and fullback are to be aware of the possibility of the 40/20 kick. These players to combine on kick returns and use these opportunities as a lethal attacking option exploiting any deficiencies in the opposition's chase game.

It is preferred that our first defender to the ball carrier goes low and stops the forward progress of the opposition. The second defender is to wrap up the ball and ensure the ball carrier is put to ground on his back. Every tackle should be determined and aggressive. Our low defender is to regain his feet first, only the defender over the top can ensure this occurs.

Our aim in defence is to be totally effective in stopping the opposition's attack sapping their confidence and thus allowing our attack to be more potent.

Our goal for 2001 is to keep the opposition's score under 12 points on average per game.

Defensive Principles

1. Our defence will operate on a "shorten line" base. The last three defenders (normally winger, centre and half back or five eight) in our line should stand slightly inside their opposite (that is about one body width). Their exact position inside will be dependant on several issues, such as the opposition team, the individual opponent, their field position, the score etc.
2. We will put them on the ground every time (this gives us time to recover the 10 metres and to adjust the width of our line and individual positioning within the line)
3. We will have someone going low every tackle. In most instances this should be the man first to the ball carrier (this ensures that we get the man on to the ground and limit their forward movement).

4. Retreat 10 metres quickly, do this by running forwards but watching the ball at all times by looking over your shoulder (cricket turn). Turn quickly to face up to the opposition, adjust your position if necessary and locate the referee to ensure you are on side (adjustment of your position laterally should only be done if time allows).
5. Talk and encourage each other all the time. Positive talk saps the opposition's confidence. Praise each other when a good tackle is made. Markers talk to each other, post defenders talk to the markers and to the second defender in the line either side of the ruck and everyone talk to the player on either side of you.
6. Move forward together quickly keeping our line. Get off the 10 metre mark quickly, take the first 4 to 5 steps. Push towards the ball when play goes to the other side of the Play-the-Ball. Always keep in the same relation to each other in the defensive line.
7. Put pressure on their kickers. Do this by telling your team-mates and the opposition that you are going to do so.
8. When defending close to our line, cover and tackle the dummy half first (tell the dummy half 'you have him covered') then chase out in the direction of the ball if it is passed.
9. On all occasions recover quickly. Get on your feet and regain position in the line (this is important from restarts of play e.g. taps after penalty kicks for line and after a missed or ineffective tackle).
10. When the opposition kick, get back as quickly as you can and look to assist in gaining ground and operating the attack pattern.
11. Remember defence is 95% commitment and 5% technique and chase, and keep on chasing.

ATTACK WITH YOUR DEFENCE

BE ACTIVE AND PREPARED TO REACT

BE DETERMINED AND AGGRESSIVE

ATTACKING PRINCIPLES

Our base attacking pattern will be to work the ball to either of the two 20 metre lines. This will give us the options of either attacking the 20 metre short side or to spread the ball back across the field.

Generally we will achieve this by the following:- Two hit ups (forward rucks, dummy half runs, ruck

variations, ruck variations + 1) in the same direction, followed by spreading the ball quickly through the hands of the dummy half, first receiver and second receiver and then onto a running player. Ideally this runner should have the assistance of a decoy runner and back up runner/s.

As a basic rule when inside our half the centre will run the decoy for the second row forward to receive the ball and when we are in our opponent's half the second row forward runs the decoy for the centre to receive the ball.

When attacking in our opponent's half and we are spreading the ball wide, if room and time permits an extra player to shift the ball to the running players is worth considering.

Two further things to consider is that we will generally pass best right to left so attacking the left hand side of their defence maybe the best option. However by attacking the right hand side we force the defenders to tackle with their left shoulders which is generally the weakest side.

When attacking inside 10 metres from the tryline do not be afraid (especially the forwards) to have a go at getting over the line. If we get held up we get a loose head and the feed to a 10 metre scrum unless it is last tackle. Similarly on the last tackle when we are attacking inside the 20 metre line if we can not get a kick into the ingoal area run the ball on the last. Everyone should be prepared to be involved in this play by getting into a position to back up and receive the ball.

As much as possible we will cross the advantage line from dummy half before shifting the ball. When attacking inside 30 metres from the tryline we will attack off a flat line with support players running into spaces between defenders. When inside 10 metres set up 2 attacking lines, one flat and the second starting from a deeper position but still flat.

Kicking Game

Generally our long kicking game will always be into the short (closest) corner of the field. Our chase team will be halfback, lock, both centres, five eight, both second rowers and the winger on the side of the kick. The front row and hooker are expected to chase as well with the fullback a possible chaser if another player covers his position.

When we are attacking from 30 metres out our kick preference is to kick into the ingoal with a ground kick and catch our opponents there so as to regain possession from the goal line drop out. The other option for the kick in this area is the cross-field bomb type kick.



The Roosters' Recruitment Drive

With Brian Canavan - Sydney Roosters Football Manager

Written by David Haynes

The Sydney Roosters' centre pairing of Ryan Cross and Shannon Hegarty is the envy of most NRL clubs. Not only is the dynamic duo the same age, 21, with speed, skill and athleticism to burn - both are the products of the Roosters' burgeoning recruitment program headed by League legend Arthur Beetson and long-time football manager Brian Canavan. It's no secret a good recruitment and development program is the lifeblood of any successful Rugby League operation - ensuring prolonged on-field vitality.

However, it is particularly important for the Tri-Colours. As an inner-city Sydney club the Roosters have less local talent in their well, and unlike Brisbane, North Queensland and Penrith who are ambushed by budding stars, the Roosters have to look further a field. "On last year's figures we've got roughly 560 juniors," said Canavan. "I believe Penrith have got 6500, so our recruitment system has to be spot on otherwise we can't be competitive."

further appraise the need for the player and how he fits into the plans, including the salary cap. "

Once Beetson has made the journey to see the player first-hand the wheels are in motion. "If we are attracted to the player's talent and we think there is some potential we would then commence the process by giving them a scholarship," explains Canavan.

Sounds easy - but having the goods on the paddock is not the only factor the Roosters take into account. "Your first benchmark is talent, the player's actual physical prowess on the field," he said. "The next thing is their attitude to numerous aspects of life. Young kids come from split homes, nuclear homes, wealthy families, poor families... They come from schools that had a high emphasis on sport and schools that had a high emphasis on music, so a multitude of backgrounds and behaviours enter the club each year. That is why it is very important that all clubs have welfare type staff."

If the player impresses, over time, he will invariably find himself training alongside Roosters stalwarts Brad Fittler, Luke Ricketson and Bryan Fletcher.

According to Canavan, the first step in the recruitment process is hearing of a potential champion through a third party, usually a scout with some connection to the club. "The scout has to have a good knowledge of the game," he said. "They don't necessarily have to be a former representative senior player, but have to have a very good knowledge and a very low key approach. We don't want to be too forward with scouts promoting our club over and above others. A simple introduction is all that is required"

Although scouts take the initial step of identifying the talent, the Roosters expand upon a scout's recommendation. "It has to be Arthur (Beetson) who goes through the process of viewing, meeting and recommending the player to the club. The club then

"We carry out some research on his schooling and his background," said Canavan. "It is delicate. We meet the parents, locate a teacher and local junior clubs and ask them simple questions about his attitude and commitment." The Roosters then set about gauging the player's family background. "One of us, usually Arthur (Beetson) will go and visit the boy at his home to get a feel for his family life." he said. "Is the kid well organised? Is he punctual? Does he do good things around home for his parents? Is he a team player? Those sorts of things." If the player impresses, over time, he will invariably find himself training alongside Roosters stalwarts Brad Fittler, Luke Ricketson and Bryan Fletcher.

Canavan admits that while the scholarship system starts when the players are 15/16 years-old, contract decisions aren't made until they turn 17/18. "That doesn't necessarily mean that you actually take them out of their home and put them into your club," he said. "In the main, you leave them at home to finish Year 12 and then you bring them to the club the next year...The scholarship system followed by the contract situation is by far and away the best way to go as both parties are totally familiar with each other."

In most circumstances a Roosters scholarship varies from provision of equipment and training gear to financial assistance for schooling and other sporting endeavours. "The families of scholarship players have often had to shell out hundreds of dollars over the years in sporting levies, boots and mouthguards," said Canavan. "So it is a nice way just to return some support for their efforts in our game."

When the players do eventually make the trek to Bondi Junction, the Roosters have a system in place to accommodate them. While some clubs opt for boarding houses with a chaperone. The Roosters preference is to billet their young players to separate families, making the transition from home a little less daunting. "Clubs have different ways of addressing the accommodation - we use boarding families," said Canavan. "From our club's point of view we find the boarding family situation the best. We've got several players who have arrived and formed deep relationships with their boarding family and won't move on."

Helping the Roosters' blooming recruitment push is the strong relationship they share with feeder club Redcliffe. "We have currently three players from the Redcliffe club playing with us, all of them are borderline First Grade players," said Canavan. "We have another three boys contracted to our club who are remaining with Redcliffe, and we have got another couple on scholarships." The bond has meant the Dolphins now sign players with the Roosters in mind. "Redcliffe now recruits with an emphasis that they are the stepping stone to a Sydney Roosters playing contract," he said.

Even promising rugby union talent doesn't escape the Roosters' grasp. Over the past five years they have recruited several union players including Ryan Cross,

Peter Jorgensen and Darren June. "We don't actively go into the sport of rugby union and say 'we are going to try and recruit Timmy Horan,'" said Canavan. "If we know that a player has Rugby League in his background, or the player is very interested in having a go at League...we'll go along and have a look at him and say can he adapt to our game. In many cases they can because the games are very similar these days."

Also playing a large part in the Tri-Colours' recruitment drive is succession planning. Like many clubs, the Roosters learnt the hard way, and now recognise the importance of grooming young players to fill the boots of retiring First Graders. Canavan uses the example of Fittler. With 'Freddy' having only a couple of seasons left at the top level, the Roosters have recruited a young five-eighth who they hope will fill the void when Fittler does decide to call it quits. While the loss of such a champion player will always leave a chink in a side's armour, the Roosters' style of forward-planning will at least ensure the effect is somewhat minimised.

And what are the chances of a player not replacing out-going First Graders? Quite high, according to Canavan. Although he believes that a player who has come through the scholarship ranks to junior contract level should at least play First Division. "It is rare that if you are able to do good homework and the player is committed that he won't get to First Division," he said. "Whether they make the next step no one knows, but the success rate is not that high, but we are about providing opportunity."

The ebbs and flows of a sports organisation are influenced greatly by its recruitment program. By constantly injecting new talent into its system, a club can reduce the likelihood of a long-term trough, while dramatically increasing the chances of pro-longed success. The Roosters are a prime example. Having lost Ivan Cleary and then Richie Barnett last season, they needed a new centre combination. In what is testimony to the Roosters' recruitment regime, Cross and Hegarty were more than capable replacements and are now on the verge of representative selection. Having offset the departure of two experienced campaigners, the Roosters' new three-quarters demonstrate how potent the recruitment cycle can be when done correctly.

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Session Guides

By **BOB WOODS** - ARL Level 2 coach

BOB WOODS has been coaching for 14 years in Canberra with the Junior Rams. His experience spans from U/8's to U/17's as well as coaching teams in the local school competition. In 1997 Bob was Coaching Director of the Rams Juniors for 3 years as well as coaching a Minor League Development Squad. Currently coaching an U/14's side with the Junior Rams in Canberra he says these players are at the start of their Junior Representative careers and he is focusing totally on the players having fun.

Bob has given RLCM permission to publish the following session guides from his web site www.bobwood.net/ A site which offers useful coaching information for coaches at all levels of Rugby League.

MINI SESSION

The major requirements for a Mini Session are:

Time Keep sessions to a minimum. About half an hour for U/6s to U/7s, building up to an hour session for U/9s.

Basics Ensure that the basics of handling, passing and tackling are the main focus of your training sessions. Have a basic game plan, but don't spend most of the session on practising your game plan.

Fun Ensure games are included to make the session fun. Many kids will be trying out the sport for the first time. If they don't have fun - they won't be back.

Communication Treat players as individuals.

WARM UP

Always include a fun warm up session. This has a number of advantages:

- If players are late for training, they miss out on the fun game. The players will then put pressure on Mum to get there on time.
 - It gets the players use to warming up before training. It is important to establish good habits early on.
1. For a 5-7 minute warm up, choose a game that emphasises the basic handling skills and/or hand-eye coordination.
 2. Sample Warm Up Game

A	B C D	A	B C D
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Split players into two teams.2. A's start with the ball.3. A's pass the ball to B to C to D.4. When D has the ball, he zig zags back through the line.5. As D passes a player, that player moves down one spot (C to D) (B to C) etc.6. When D is at A's spot he passes the ball to A.7. The process is repeated until all players are back in their original positions.8. First team back wins. Play best out of 3.9. You can extend the game by having players do various things on the way back: * Fend; * Move ball from hand to hand.			

STRETCHING

Attempting to get the players into good habits. Depending on the age group, the coach will generally lead the session. Do a basic series of stretches, from top to toe.

SKILLS SESSION

This is the main emphasis. Again, focus on the basics. Don't spend too much time on any one drill, but do not try to include too much in any one session either.

As a basic rule of thumb, players get bored with a Drill after 3 to 5 minutes. Schedule the drills to last about 5 minutes, with a couple of variations in that time.

Allow for equal time for attack and defence drills.

Sample of variations in a Square Drill

Start	Variation 1	Variation 2 Two Balls
X.....XA.....BD.....C X.....X	X.....XA.....BD.....C X.....X	X.....XA.....BD.....C X.....X
1. A passes to B & runs to B's spot. 2. B passes to C & runs to C's spot. etc	1. A passes to D & runs to D's spot. 2. D passes to C & runs to C's spot. etc	1. A runs to C, while B runs to D 2. A hands off to C, & B hands off to D

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

Children at this age should require little, if any, physical conditioning. However our changing society has led to children not being as naturally fit as they have were in the past.

If a conditioning session is included, keep it light and short. Make it a game, such as relay races over 10 metres.

AWARENESS (DECISION MAKING) SESSION

When players get better at the basic skills, start to include small games that involve decision-making.

An example of this would be a 2 on 1 game, where 2 attackers face 1 defender. The attackers have to decide whether to pass or try to beat the defender themselves.

A defensive example would be 2 on 2, with defenders having to communicate.

A popular game used at this age is Red Rover. However it is not always the most suitable activity. Often the stronger players will take advantage of the weaker players, and neither improve.

In this section you can also include rehearsal of a Game Plan. Coaches say that kids of this age are too young for structured play, but more often than not, U6s and U7s are receptive of a simple game plan.

For Under 8s & 9s this is even more so the case.

Keep the Game Plan simple and make sure that you involve ALL players in some role. Generally a switch of direction on the third play (with an option for a dummy pass) is sufficient at this age.

WARM DOWN

Finish the session off with a game. The players should always finish off on a positive note and leave feeling that they have enjoyed the session.

MOD SESSION

By the time players have reached this age group, they can start to become more unruly than the Minis. It is important that sessions are disciplined and that you maintain a time schedule. Players become bored within 3-5 minutes of any particular drill. Ensure that you do not just let drills drag on, or you will lose their interest. Even within the 3-5 minutes, make sure that you include variations in the drill.

WARM UP

Always include a warm up at the start of your session. Generally you will use drills emphasising the following basic skills:

- Hand and eye co-ordination drills
- Good and bad hand drills
- Peripheral vision or traffic drills

You may also decide to include a warm up that emphasises specific team requirements to strengthen weaknesses.

These players are starting to reach an age when discipline is important. Ensure that your training session starts on time.

STRETCHING

It is essential that you start to stretch these players properly.

Establish a routine to ensure that the team starts and finishes together. Work in a logical sequence, such as Top to Toe. After the team stretch allow players a couple of minutes for individual stretches for specific problem areas.

SKILLS SESSION

In this part of the training session you need to continue to build on the basic skills learnt in Minis. The players must be given time to develop and refine these basic skills. Many times on a football field it is the player reacting instinctively that will result in the try being scored. Once your players are competent in the basic skills, allow them to rehearse these skills in a game like situation. Encourage every right decision, talk to them about wrong decisions - ask for their feedback - "Why do you think that went wrong? How could it be done better?" - Encourage them to try it a different way. Make sure that you are also identifying any weaknesses in their basics.

AWARENESS (DECISION MAKING) SESSION

After practicing your basic skills, the players should be given a chance to try them out in small, sided games that will simulate the conditions where they will use them in a game.

TEAM SESSION

DEFENCE

You should give equal time to defence and offence. Coaches often complain about their team's poor defensive record, yet their entire training session is devoted to their attacking game plan. The defensive part of your session should cover the following areas:

TACKLING

- Basic tackling – side-on, front-on and from behind.
- Specific tackling styles - blocking, two-step technique, gang tackling.

PATTERNS

- **Marker Defence** - ensure that the players are aware of your requirements for Marker Defence and practice "Shutting The Gate".
- **Style (Up & Out, Up & In)** - at the Under 10 or 11 age group start to introduce the basics of defensive patterns. Generally Up and Out (or slide) is the easiest pattern for juniors to use.

- **Left and Right Units** - After the introduction of a basic defensive pattern, there is a need to start locking in your left and right defensive units. To begin with lock in your wings and centres.
- **Shut The Gate** - the term used for defence behind the ruck area. If the opposition move the ball Right, the Left defensive unit will move across the field to shut them down. If the Right side doesn't move across as well, then a gap will open up at the ruck area. The Right side defence must move across to "Shut The Gate".

OFFENCE

- **Zones** - as players get older the need to start educating them on the different requirements of each zone. Game plans will depend on the strengths and weaknesses of the team and the opposition. But generally adopt a low risk strategy in the Red Zone, a more open and expansive pattern in the Yellow(Orange) Zone, and an adventurous pattern in the Green Zone. The Green Zone is often overlooked by coaches. You spend a lot of time and effort to get there, you should practice at getting a result once you are there.
- **Advantage line** - Players should be aware of the advantage line and of the necessity of crossing it with each play.
- **Ruck plays** - Ruck Plays will generally be basic plays, perhaps a ball behind a decoy or a ball turned back inside.
- **Kicking plays** - Rehearse the different types of kicks that are used in the game with the kickers and the chasers of these kicks and how to chase them.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

Players are starting to get to an age when physical conditioning is becoming more important. Keep this part relevant to their ages and needs. There is no benefit from running them into the ground. Beware of overtraining the players in this area. The bodies are still growing and it is easy to do damage to players if they are pushed too hard.

WARM DOWN

Again be aware of the players' ages and the changes in their physical make up. Always warm players down after a session. Generally the players will be looking for a game to finish of the session.

Notes

INTERNATIONAL RULES SESSION

Teams in these age groups **should** have the basics right. The need to keep reinforcing the basics is important, Now the need to start to really teach players about the game of Rugby League.

If coaching a club side, you will generally have a pretty fair idea of your opposition, but now you must start studying you opposition. Look for their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of your own team. Your coaching now is to exploit the opposition's weaknesses, nullify their strengths, strengthen (and cover) your weaknesses and take optimum advantage of your strengths.

With Representative teams coaches don't have that luxury, so the aim should be to have the team performing as a unit, allow them enough freedom to express their individuality on the field. Identify players who can read a game and allow them to change tactics to take advantage of weaknesses that they spot while the game is in progress.

Coaches also have to continue to grow, train yourself to be able to watch a game as a coach and not a spectator. Analyse a game as it is progressing, videos are nice, but they will only help the next time that you meet this team.

Players at this age need increased physical conditioning and the coach needs to periodise training to meet those needs, while at the same time keeping your players fresh. Always ensure that rest cycles are included in the yearly training cycle. Over-training will not make players stronger or fitter, it will actually have the opposite effect.

Listed below are the main points and the important areas within each of those points. Training sessions will vary according to a team's needs, each of the points should be covered at some time during the season.

WARM UP

- Hand and eye co-ordination drills
- Good and bad hand drills
- Peripheral vision or traffic drills
- Specific team requirements to strengthen weaknesses

STRETCHING

Establish a routine to ensure that the team starts and finishes together. Work in a logical sequence, such as Top to Toe. After the team stretch allow players a couple of minutes for individual stretches for specific problem areas.

SKILLS SESSION

DEFENCE SESSION

TACKLING

Basic tackling - don't forget to work on basic technique, too many players get to senior levels with poor basic technique.

Specific tackling styles - start to introduce specific tackling styles, such as Curve & Drop.

Fatigue work - when players are fatigued their technique drops off. At times during the season introduce fatigue work in their tackling session, emphasising technique. Make your players aware of the importance of maintaining good technique while fatigued.

PATTERNS

Marker - Make Players aware of the marker defence pattern and the reasons for using that pattern. Practice the pattern.

Style (Up & Out, Up & In) - Explain the defensive pattern, how it works, it's strengths and weaknesses, and rehearse the pattern.

Left and Right Units - explain how the left and right units work, what each players responsibilities are within these units and rehearse your defensive patterns with these units.

Shut The Gate - ensure that your players are aware of closing the gap behind the ruck area and practice your ruck defence.

ABC & XYZ - used by some coaches to refer to close in defenders (ABC) and the wider defenders (XYZ). These teams will have specific calls, such as “ABC’s work” to remind these players to work hard for the the first three tackles. If this pattern is to be used ensure that players rehearse it and they nominate the talkers.

OFFENCE

Zones - Have specific attacking patterns in each zone. Explain these plays to players and rehearse them. Design an offensive pattern specifically for the Red Zone and rehearse getting out of that Zone.

Lateral field positions (percentages or 1,2,3 or ABC) - To the best of my knowledge Warren Ryan instigated percentages in lateral field positions. 50% was halfway across the field, 70% was almost three-quarters across etc. Teams started to divide the field into imaginary grids (similar to gridiron). The game plan involved working the play to a specific point within a Zone. For example in the Orange Zone you may work the ball to the 70 to open up the field for you backs. Or in the Green Zone you may work to the 50 to give you the opportunity to attack either side of the ruck. Some coaches are now simplifying the division by breaking the field up into 3 longitudinal areas (Red, Orange, Green) and 3 lateral areas (1,2,3 or A,B,C). The idea is to make it easier for players to identify the area to work towards.

So in the examples above the team would work towards a C (or 3) field position in the Orange Zone and a B (or 2) position in the Green Zone. If you have potential Rep or Grade players, find out what the Rep or Grade teams are using and familiarise your players with the field positions.

Advantage line - Players must know what the advantage line is, and the importance of crossing the advantage line. Devise and rehearse ruck plays to counter the opposition’s ruck defence and to ensure that your team gains forward momentum by continually crossing the advantage line.

Ruck plays -The secret to successful Ruck Plays is rehearsal and timing. Power plays - will be used in either the Red Zone or the Green Zone.

Power plays are designed to smash the opposition defence line to either allow room for a kick (to get out of the Red Zone) or to open up the defence to allow scoring opportunities from the Green Zone. Players should know what the teams Power Plays are and when and how to use them. Rehearse the power play situations.

Surrender plays - When coming out of the Red Zone many players try to be Macho and fight the tackles. Teach your players how to use surrender plays (for example diving between two tacklers, landing on hands & knees and getting a quick play the ball away).

Kicking plays – Chip kicks are a low percentage option, best left for the Green Zone. But whatever kicking plays are used, the most important component is the chase team. Rehearse all kick plays (offensive and defensive), but also rehearse the chase team with the rest of the team. Ensure an effective chase to get a result from your kick plays.

SKILL WORK

Keep reinforcing all the basic skills. Allocate time during the season to work on specific areas that need attention and have part of the training session dedicated to that skill. As players improve put their skills to the test in a game-like situation. Re-assess and if necessary take the skill back a level and work on it again. Once the players are performing the skill correctly in a game like situation, work the skill in a fatigue situation.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

Set your physical conditioning program to ensure that your Macro and Micro cycles allow sufficient recovery. If you work on a 4 week Macro Cycle then your Micro Cycles should gradually increase the work in cycles 1, 2 & 3 and then reduce the work in cycle 4. Level 1 of the second Macro will commence at a higher level than Level 1 in Macro Cycle 1.

AWARENESS (DECISION MAKING) SESSION

Design mini games to allow players to practice various scenarios and to try different solutions to a scenario. Use 2 on 3 (or 3 on 4 etc) to hone players skills. Decision making drills are about - reacting to the defence. Teach players to trust their natural instincts and make a decision on what is in front of them.

WARM DOWN

Always warm down, play a game. After the game, stretch the players and give a quick overview of how the session went.

Rugby League's Battle for Great Britain

Written by **RUDI MEIR** - Senior Lecturer in Human Movements Southern Cross University

Background

On the 8th of May, 1996 Wigan Rugby League Club took on Bath Rugby Union, 1996 Courage League Champions at Maine Road in Manchester. This game was one of two played in a special history making series between the two codes. The Maine Road game was played under the rules of the 13 a side game and the return match was played at Twickenham under the 15 a side rules. Wigan won the first encounter with an emphatic 82-6 score line. The return game at Twickenham against Bath under the 15 a side rules was less convincing but a non the less impressive display of athleticism, power and skill from the Wigan players. Around the same time, Wigan were "invited" to be the first Rugby League club to compete in the famous Middlesex Sevens at Twickenham on the 11th of May. Wigan made it through all four rounds of this famous tournament to once again demoralise the best British Rugby had to offer in front of a very partisan 61,000 strong crowd. Many pages in the sport press were devoted to commentary on the clear gap that existed between the two codes.

A little over 12 months later Wigan was to become just one of ten British professional Rugby League teams to compete in Super League's Visa World Club Challenge (WCC). Wigan won just two games in this competition to finish on top of European Pool A of the WCC. They were then to fail, along with the rest of the British clubs, to make it through the WCC quarterfinals. With the 2000 Lincoln World Cup (WC) now behind us and the failure of the host nation to make it beyond the semi-final round, some might suggest that things don't appear to have improved much for English Rugby League.

Knowing England WC Head Coach John Kear and his assistant Damian McGrath personally and the preparation and planning that was put into England's campaign, it would be fair to say that no matter who was at the helm, the result was unlikely to be any different – in spite of the wholehearted commitment of all involved. Ultimately, John Kear was provided with a squad of players that were the product of the

game's domestic professional competition and player development system. In the aftermath of the WC many questions have been raised from a range of stakeholders about the future of the game in England and its ability to produce players and teams that can truly compete at the international level.

Since 1996 I have been lucky enough to be invited to England by a number of clubs competing in the English Super League to work with their players and coaches. As a result, I have experienced first-hand many of the problems facing clubs and the development of players. This paper presents a personal view of some of the problems facing English professional Rugby League clubs and the English game's inability (in recent years) to produce a team that can compete against Australia on the International stage.

1. PLAYER DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE WITHIN AUSTRALIA

There needs to be recognition of the fact that Australia has a significantly larger pool of Rugby League talent to draw on when selecting players to play at the professional level. In contrast, England doesn't. The British Amateur Rugby League Association (BARLA) was established in 1973 and takes a very active role in junior development and is responsible for the administration of the game at the amateur level. It has undertaken these roles independently of the Rugby Football League (RFL), the game's governing body – BARLA and the RFL have not always seen eye-to-eye on what is best for the game and have some times let self-interest dictate the direction of policy. Equally, some would also argue that many of the Super League Europe (SLE) clubs are also served more by self-interest than what is good for the game as a whole. All in all there is a high degree of fragmentation within the game in England although efforts are being made to overcome this.

The RFL is responsible for preparing teams for International representation, although BARLA has done an outstanding job of preparing amateur teams

for International representation. The RFL also has a development role and funds positions for about 3-4 regional development managers located in key regions. In addition, each of the 12 SLE clubs have their own “community programmes”, some of which are very effective, and through their News Corporation/Sky income employ club development officers. However, much of this effort is very much concentrated (with the exception of the London Broncos) along the M62 corridor in the north of England.

This raises the issue of the way the game is promoted at the junior level. League’s closest sporting competitor, in terms of participants and fans, is Rugby Union – the Rugby Football Union (RFU) has approximately 50,000 registered players and a national development programme serviced by 45 development officers and 9 regional managers located throughout England. Contrast this with the RFL’s network of 3-4 regional development managers! The RFU has deep pockets and is in a very strong position financially and is increasingly committing resources to the development of players for International representation. The question therefore is what is realistically achievable by the RFL and SLE under these circumstances.

The Australian Rugby League has a development structure that includes:

1.1 **Schoolboy competitions** - Primary and Secondary Schools competitions conducted on a regional, zone, state and national basis e.g. the Aussie Home Loans Cup, Combined High Schools and Catholic High Schools/Colleges competitions, etc.

1.2 **Group competitions** - e.g. Junior teams attached to senior clubs throughout NSW and QLD and other regions within Australia (including Jersey Flegg, Harold Matthews Cup and S.G. Ball, etc.)

1.3 **Junior representative competitions** - associated directly with both the above competition structures e.g. Country Championships, interstate matches and Country versus City, etc.

1.4 **The Rugby League Academy** - based at Narrabeen in Sydney and primarily responsible for administrator, player and coach education. The Academy is the administrative centre for the ARL’s team of development officers. ARL development officers are responsible for junior development within a specified region and work primarily at the primary and secondary schools level but also have involvement with the various Group competitions based in NSW/QLd. The Queensland Rugby League has a similar Coaching and Development organisation based at Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane.

1.5 **Senior representative opportunities** - e.g. City versus Country, NSW versus QLD and international fixtures, etc.

By the time a player makes it to the professional ranks in Australia the chances are that he has played representative standard football at a variety of levels (both junior and/or senior) before arriving on the professional scene. The sheer size of this structure and the number of players involved means that when a professional club finally notices them they have probably already achieved a high level of skill and football ability. All this is supported by a well developed system of coach education that has seen the delivery of quality coaching and minimum standards right from the grass roots level to all players.

Let’s not forget that Rugby League in Australia is ranked with Australian Rules as our nation’s dominant professional team (winter) sports. In England soccer casts a huge shadow over everything on the sporting landscape. In addition, financially Rugby League suffers from its status as a very poor cousin to Rugby Union. The RFU has turned around its recent poor financial position to the point where it is looking at ways to spend its money while also planning for the game’s growth both domestically and internationally. The Zurich Premiership clubs receive approximately \$4.5 million per year from TV rights alone. Super League clubs receive approximately \$1.6 million from their deal. This in part explains why Union is able to target League for players.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS

The “gap” in standards between the Australian and the English clubs might best be explained by the following:

2.1 It stands to reason that the more sophisticated development structure in place in Australia is producing a higher number of quality players for the professional clubs to draw on. A process of natural selection that sees only the very best players competing at this level, from which the best of the best then play at representative level.

2.2 Because there is a higher quality player being selected, combined with the sheer numbers involved and therefore the bigger pool of talent to draw on, the professional competition tends to be of a compared to England) high standard from top to bottom. Even when we had a 20 team competition (pre 1997), teams at the bottom of the competition had the ability to beat teams at the top of the competition. Arguably, this is not the case in England.

2.3 As a result of points 2.1 and 2.2 above, the Australian competition possesses an inherent “intensity” that results in all teams being “tested” week after week. In England the top teams tend to only have a truly testing game when they play each other. When they play the lower ranked teams they tend to play back to their standard. This means that a top team may play one intense game in 4 rounds. This has profound implications for the development and preparation of a team.

2.4 Until 1996, all but Wigan would have been described as “part-time” clubs. This explains, to a great extent, the success of Wigan during the 10 year period from the mid 80’s to 90’s. The fact is, that the benefits of “full-time” professionalism, in terms of training and coaching, is going to take possibly 4-5 seasons to manifest its self on the field. However, the important thing to note here is that improvements can already be seen. There is a compound effect that will develop in the players and coaches as each season goes by. Remember, in Australia almost all the teams have been “full-time” professionals for some years - in the case of clubs like Brisbane and Canberra, they have been full-time for at least the past 10 years, if not longer.

2.5 There is clearly a higher level of Professionalism needed in terms of coaching and training. There are too many “amateurs” involved with the game in England at the professional level. This necessitates the “importing” of knowledge and expertise from outside the English game e.g. the use of Australian coaches. While I can understand the sentiments of many of the English coaches who don’t support this, I also feel that it is this very attitude that is holding advancements in coaching back in England. There needs to be more focus on coach education at the professional level...at the end of the day it’s in their best interest.

2.6 Australian players - there is an argument that suggests that the number of Australian players should be restricted on the basis that it is reducing the opportunity for local talent to play at the highest level. This sentiment, to a certain extent, is understandable. Certainly, what should be discouraged is the situation currently in place at London and more recently Hull (and was the case at Paris), where almost the entire team/club is simply an Australian outpost for players who can’t, or don’t want to, get a start in the Australian domestic competition. However, it’s a very simplistic view that says that these players aren’t good enough to get a start in Australia and are rejects. The simple fact is, as stated earlier, that the Australian system is strong enough to develop far more high quality players

than the there are places available in the Australian club system. At the end of the day each club can only justify holding just so many hookers, half-backs, props, etc. While SLE clubs are currently allowed a maximum of 5 import positions per squad perhaps thought should be given to a system that allows only 3 of these players to be nominated each week for a game.

Experience in sports such as soccer, basketball, rugby union, etc. have all shown that if the right “type” of player from outside the domestic competition is signed to a club there can be many benefits. Not least of these is that of a role model. Clearly, some Australian players bring with them the attitude, commitment and professionalism of their previous coaching and training in the Australian competition. There’s also the very real attraction from a marketing perspective that makes an enormous contribution to the overall promotion of the game in England by having Australian “name” players competing in Super League. The 2001 Super League is already promoting this fact very strongly. It will also presumably increase the interest back in Australia as fans look out for the likes of Johns, Clyde, Carroll and Co to see how they are going.

3. CONTROLLING THE DISTRIBUTION OF TALENT

One of the problems faced by both hemispheres of the game is the issue of the wealthy and/or more successful clubs being able to secure the services of the game’s “best” players at the expense of the less successful teams. A proposal that has considerable merit was one developed by the ARL and set for implementation in 1998 involving the allocation of “Player Points” to each club. This involves each club having a credit of a set number of points at the start of each season (the original proposal suggested 70?). Points are then deducted from this credit on the basis of the experience of each player signed by the club. For example, a “current” International with 6 Test matches to his credit may be “valued” at “x” number of points. A current first team player with 150 First Grade games to his credit may be valued at “y” number of points. A player who was developed within the club’s junior development programme and had stayed with the club until his entry into the first team squad may be valued at 0 points (this would encouraged clubs to focus on their development and coaching of juniors). And a player with 10 years continuous service may also be valued at 0 points (encouraging loyalty both from the player and the club).

Such a system would make the distribution of playing talent easier to control from the RFL's point of view. Obviously, the RFL would know exactly what the playing history of every player was that was attached to a club and would therefore be able to debit points against that club until they had none left. Clubs can pay players what they like but in the end, once they had no more "credits" left, they couldn't sign and register any more players. This would stop clubs like Wigan and Leeds simply dominating the marketplace with their cheque book and also artificially raising the value of all players.

4. COMPETITION STRUCTURE

Having experienced the current competition format in England, it is clear that there are elements of its structure that work very much against the player e.g.:

4.1 Since the introduction of Super League, there have been numerous occasions where teams may have to play three Super League games within the space of 9-10 days. In fact, during my time at Leeds during 1997 the team on one occasion had to play 3 games in 8 days...this is ludicrous! Given the nature of our sport, players simply can't maintain a high standard of competitiveness when playing this number of games. In fact, such a competition schedule may explain, in part, why some of the English teams did not perform to expectations in the WCC during 1997. Clearly the accumulative effect of fatigue over the season is accelerated when players have such a demanding schedule.

This issue is now being perpetuated by the game's administration by increasing the total number of games played. In 2001 some teams will play each other 4 times during the normal season. This is justified on a misguided belief that more games will mean more revenue. Sport marketing research has shown for some time that it is the quality and closeness of competition, presence of name players (ie stars) and the like that, amongst other things, play a significant role in terms of attendance. Fewer games would potentially lead to higher levels of competitiveness because players can maintain the necessary intensity and possibly not succumb to the vagaries of injury and fatigue associated with a long season. Let's face it, some fans also suffer fatigue from watching their team get constantly beaten or similarly winning games too easily!

4.2 The proposal to re-introduce the "War of the Roses" as a selection series in preparation for the Ashes tour is a positive step. As is the proposed home counties games. Each of these will allow the best of

the best in Great Britain to compete in high quality games that will be a step up from the regular Super League competition.

5. RELEGATION AND PROMOTION

The current system of promotion and relegation in England has some major short-comings. The most significant of these is the fact that it encourages a myopic management style that makes decisions based purely on a club's position within the competition. During 1997 a total of 7 coaches were sacked (or resigned). During 2000 it was 4. This presents nothing but an air of instability about the game and certainly does nothing for the development of players.

A franchise type system would allow clubs to develop strategic plans that would see them strengthen their position within their community and within the wider and highly competitive sport entertainment market place. Any future expansion, which appears to be constantly under consideration by the RFL and SLE, would become farcical if, in the short-term, a team in Dublin or Newcastle were to be fighting the prospect of relegation each season. It would presumably severely restrict investment by any franchisee if they thought they could be relegated in their first season of ownership - not to mention sponsorship, etc., etc.

The current system, which has its origins in professional soccer, promotes panic management of the worst kind. It also develops a sense of uncertainty with fans since they have no guarantee that their club will be in the premier competition from one season to the next. This has the effect of eroding the supporter base that is so vital to a club.

Of course, many in England would argue strongly that such a system does nothing to encourage clubs at the lower level and gives them nothing to aspire to. This is true, but given the enormous pressure on all SLE clubs financially it is unlikely that a newly relegated club would have the resources to mount a serious long-term challenge for inclusion in the premiership competition. The most likely outcome would be yoyo clubs that would simply be up one year and down the next and be beaten from pillar to post each week effectively weakening the overall quality of the competition. It would obviously be difficult to attract quality players and coaches under such a scenario.

6. PREPARATION OF PLAYERS

Surprisingly, English Rugby League clubs have few specialist support staff with specific expertise and knowledge in the sport in the areas of physical preparation and skill development. This is also the

case in some Premier League soccer clubs and professional Rugby Union clubs. It appears there still exists the old approach of paying large sums of money for players with a “natural” talent for the game assuming that they will some how reach their full potential under the guidance of the First Grade coach. There is little recognition of the role played by specialist support staff.

Training methods and resources are generally of a low standard when compared with the systems and facilities available to Australian professional teams. There is no system of accreditation for what we would call “sports trainers” i.e. those individuals responsible for the on-field acute care and assessment of the injured athlete. In fact, there have been English clubs in the past where a staff member was referred to as a “physiotherapist” and yet had no formal training or qualifications in this highly specialised field. Until recently there has been little in the way of specific coach education as it relates to training and conditioning techniques (this is not to be confused with the excellent work that is being done in the area of coaching accreditation by both BARLA and the RFL).

Clearly there needs to be some form of “minimum” standard guidelines implemented and enforced by the RFL with respect to all those staff working with players. Unless this simplistic attitude toward the preparation of players changes it is possible that some players will struggle to reach their full potential. Tertiary qualifications are not the be all and end all but with them comes a “minimum” standard of knowledge that is essential.

I’m often asked when in England why it is that Australian players appear to be so much better than their English counterparts. In terms of skill, with the obvious exception of one or two brilliant players, I think that generally there is little to distinguish between Australian and English professional players. I truly believe, and this may sound trivial, that the biggest problem with preparing players in England is the environmental conditions. Sprint and agility work, plus position specific and unit (forwards, backs, team) drills, when the ground is frozen solid under your feet or when there have been days, or more likely weeks, of rain resulting in a highly unstable muddy mass on which to train, can only be described at best as difficult and at worst as impossible. Quality sprint and agility work, which are key elements of our game, are severally compromised in these very trying conditions. One of the key characteristics that distinguishes Australian players is their power and athleticism on

the field. Being able to complete high quality (intense) training all year round is a key factor. In addition, our entire lifestyle is geared toward outdoor living and recreation. In many cases our top players have played a variety of sports from an early age and have developed a range of sporting skills that serve them well on the field. In England for six months of the year it doesn’t get light until 8.00 am and starts to get dark around 4.00 pm, and it’s cold and wet. Consequently kids from an early age spend long periods in doors and because of the magnetism of soccer simply don’t experiment with sport like many Australian kids do.

Gym facilities are often limited. There are a number of clubs that are still trying to conduct their resistance training programmes in commercially operated gyms. Having seen and used what is on offer in England, it is clear that the below standard training facilities is a major factor holding back the development of players - and therefore the game. This has a clear impact on the quality of individual and team performance. Because of the surface conditions at training, players unwittingly modify their technique in critical areas such as tackling (e.g. players putting their heads in front of tackle bags so that they land on the bag rather than the pitch in an effort to avoid injury during tackling drills) and in the process develop poor habits that they have been carrying with them throughout their careers. Training sessions in poor weather can necessitate players to wear several layers of clothing in an effort to ward off the conditions. This restricts a player’s ability to perform at a high intensity when performing drills that require free movement of the body. It also becomes a major factor in performing individual and team skill work.

Conclusion

English Rugby League suffered a body blow from its encounters in the 1997 World Club Challenge. The recent World Cup performance will undoubtedly have the powers that be searching once again for answers. A more sophisticated structure of player development is a priority for the game if English teams are to be “competitive” when competing with their Australian counterparts. A domestic competition that is designed to encourage “quality” and not “quantity” of competition is essential and was an area identified by England WC Coach John Kear as needing review. In addition, a more effective system of education and accreditation as it relates to the role of all support staff is essential if players are to reach their full potential.

Injury Statistics

By **DOUG KING** RCpN, Dip Ng, PGCertHSc. Sports Medic. NZRL L3 Trainer.

We have all seen the players go down on the field following some form of contact with other players or due to unseen circumstances and everyone looks on concerned from within the team. Injury within the game is a risk factor that all participants understand. No one likes to be injured but when it does occur, players and coaches alike suffer. The ultimate aim of the team is to ensure that they survive every game with as little an injury toll as possible.

There is a general push from all medical care providers and accident financial companies to limit the amount and severity of the sports injuries and several steps

that it is concussion that occurs most frequently; while others identify that the ankle and knee are the most frequently injured sites. Of these injuries 56.3% are within the forwards and 43.7% in the backs. The most frequently injured positions within the team were the second row and the prop.

These injuries occur at a rate of between 44.9/1,000 playing hours to 173/1,000 playing hours or 571 injuries per 1,000 players. Basically that is one injury to players on their fourth appearance on average. The injuries occurred primarily during the tackle (77.2% of injuries) with the majority of the players being

The most frequently injured positions within the team were the second row and the prop.

have been undertaken to carry out this, but despite this there are changes within the game that have already seen players who are injured continue on irrespective of the severity of this injury to enable the team to remain competitive (e.g. A. McDougall in the Australia v. 's New Zealand 2000 World Cup Final).

Many studies and assessments have been made of Injury Statistics and how to limit or minimise them to enable better participation and more enjoyment within all sporting activities. But what of these statistics, what do we do with this information and how can we as members of a Rugby League team utilise this information best?

Of all the injuries that do occur within the game, we can often minimise the effects of these on the players with the appropriate pre-season and pre game preparation undertaken and a better understanding of what may occur and how we can limit them.

Injury Statistics.

Injury statistics have identified the "Top 5" of injuries within Rugby League. These are the Ankle (14.4%), Knee (13.3%), Leg (13.0%), Head (13.3%) and Shoulder (14.2%) injuries. Some research identifies

tackled (56.6%) becoming injured, whilst the tackler incurred 42.2% of reported injuries. The other major injury-causing factor is within the agility component when the player was running and turning before the tackle (7.9%).

Statistically the injuries occurred as Sprains and strains (53.5%), Fractures (17.3%) and Concussions (11.8%). The other 17.4% covered contusion, grazes and non-specific injuries that occurred at a rate of 42.6% in the first half and 57.4% in the second half of the game. A majority of these occurred within the third quarter of the game, usually within the first 12 minutes of the second half. It was identified that 14.1% of the injuries occurred in illegal play resulting in 29% of these injuries being concussions.

When we look at the statistical analysis of the positions in the game it becomes very obvious why these players are injured due to their workload. Research undertaken in 1997 identified the risk rate for injury within Rugby League was 50% greater for Forwards than Backs identifying that on average, a player has 27 physical confrontations within a game situation (Forwards 36.3, Backs 19.1). Transfer this statistic into Injury types then we can see that Forwards are more prone to

suffering Joint injuries (including dislocations), Concussions, Contusions and Haematomas where as Backs are more prone to Muscle Strains. The bulk of the Forwards injuries are involved in the tackle (both being tackled and tackling the opposition) where as the backs are in the running and cutting. The highest injury rate occurred to the ball carrier being tackled (forwards 13.5/game; Backs 9/game) that included injuries such as whiplash, head clashes and knocked backwards resulting in joint injuries.

Injury Sites.

The injury statistics identified show that there is a lot that can occur within the game and this should assist the team medical people in being ready to deal with those common injuries when and if they occur. As previously identified the common injury sites within Rugby League are the Ankle, Knee, Leg, Head and Shoulder. These are individually discussed below:

ANKLE

This is by far the most common injury within the game and is often referred to as the 'Bread and Butter' of the Medic with the team. The ankle joint is primarily injured within the lateral ligament complex during an inversion sprain with the foot in plantar flexion. The main ligaments that are within the Lateral Ligament Complex are the Anterior Talo-Fibular Ligament (ATFL), the Posterior Talo-Fibular Ligament (PTFL) and the Calcaneo-Fibular Ligament (CFL). Accurate identification of the mechanism of injury can assist the Trainer/Medic to correctly identify the injured ligament, but the most common ligaments injured within Rugby League in the ankle are the ATFL and the CFL. These injuries are often not fully assessed and treated with active rehabilitation and can lead to long term laxity and resultant reoccurrence to the player due to inadequate rehabilitation. They can range in severity from Grade 1 to Grade 3 and require further medical assessment and ongoing active rehabilitation for their care

KNEE

The knee is another structure that takes a fair pounding within the game and historically it is the Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) and the Medial Collateral Ligament (MCL) that takes the biggest injury toll within this joint. These ligaments can either be injured in unison or with the MCL being injured alone. The primary mechanism for the injury is where the foot is fixed whilst the body is twisted in the opposite direction during a tackle seeing both the ACL and the MCL being injured. When the tackler applies the tackle directly to the lateral (outside) aspect of the

knee driving the players leg inwards can also injure the MCL with or without the ACL being involved.

Another source of injury to the ACL can be a non-contact injury where the player is sidestepping or hyper-extending the leg whilst running and the ACL can tear out of its insertion point within the knee joint. Again accurate identification of the injury and mechanism of injury can assist the Trainer/Medic in identifying what has been injured. Note: Test for both MCL and ACL injuries with the knee injuries. These injuries can range in severity from Grade 1 to Grade 3 and need to be fully assessed and treated with active rehabilitation and physiotherapy.

LEG

The main areas that are injured are those classified as Musculo-Tendinous. These are grouped into areas where the muscles and tendons join to enable flexion and extension of the leg whilst running and turning. The main areas that can be injured are the Groin musculo-tendinous tear aka groin strain, Hamstring muscle tears, calf muscle tears, and quadriceps muscle contusions aka "corked thighs". These injuries can range in severity from Grade 1 to Grade 3 and often require further medical assessment as there may be causative factors unseen to the player and untrained medical person as well as ongoing active rehabilitation for their care. If these injuries are not appropriately treated there can be severe complications including wasting of the muscle and imbalance due to the injury which can cause a players career to be abruptly stopped.

HEAD

There are a lot of injuries that can occur to the head, but by far the worse has to be concussion. This injury is often not appropriately assessed and if not treated properly may lead to player death or long term complications as a result. Ensuring that the player is fully assessed by an appropriately qualified Sports Doctor is the best treatment for anyone suspected of suffering a head injury or having had a blow to the head in any form within the game. Too often these players are hidden within the team and not adequately assessed.

Along with the head injuries comes the complication of a high neck injury and anyone unconscious on the field should be treated as having a neck injury and not moved until specialized medical care is available. These players need to be fully assessed and cleared medically before they return to the game. The other concerns with the neck is if the player reports "pins and needles" anywhere on their body following an

incident and this again should be treated as a high neck injury and have them medically assessed by the appropriate medical personnel. Under no circumstances should they be allowed to return to play until they are fully assessed.

A Sports Doctor should also see the other injuries that can occur to the head and neck. These are the lacerations and fractures that sometimes occur and despite being a lot of blood and looking horrific may sometimes be minor, but inappropriately cared for can lead to long term physical and psychological complications.

SHOULDER

Another structure that we utilise within the game that is commonly injured is the shoulder joint. Comprising of two areas that are easily injured are the Gleno-Humeral (GH) joint (shoulder joint) and the Acromio-Clavicular (AC) joint. The most common injury to the GH joint is the anterior dislocation or the subluxation. The difference is that the dislocation is

the injured area for at least 10 minutes and then apply a Compression bandage to minimise the swelling effect. Ensure that the compression bandage does not cut off the circulation or cause the player to experience pins and needles within the area.

Evaluate the injury and once stable ensuring that they are Referred to an appropriate medical facility or Sports Doctor that can deal with the injury completely.

By taking an active interest in the player's injury and following up on them and their rehabilitation, the injured players often become more motivated to becoming appropriately rehabilitated and actively return to the sport.

These simplistic treatments can reduce the severity of the Injury Statics and assist in the reduction of time away from the playing field for the player, loss of income for the player and their family (especially if they are the sole provider) and enjoyment for all concerned.

on average, a player has 27 physical confrontations within a game situation

where the humerus is dislocated out of the glenoid cavity and remains misaligned. The subluxation is where the humerus comes out of the glenoid cavity and replaces itself. This is commonly seen following a tackle where the player runs along hold the arm at their side or shaking off the "pins and needles" feeling that they have.

The AC injury occurs over the distal aspect of the clavicle at the acromion clavicle joint that is held together by some ligaments. When these ligaments are injured they can either remain intact (Grade 1) or become torn and the clavicle is "sprung" resulting in an extra rise in the shoulder line. Both the GH and the AC injuries are best treated by being fully assessed and checked by an appropriate Sports Doctor to ensure there are no further complications

Appropriate Treatment

The appropriate treatment for all sporting injuries that are soft tissue in origin, except for head and neck injuries, is the **RICER** treatment.

Rest the body part and apply

Ice to it. Raise the injured area to allow for reduction in the swelling that is going to occur. Keep the ice on

Prevention Strategies

Now that we know what to expect from the injury statistics what can we do with the information? One suggestion is that we can utilise this information by identifying what injuries do occur and how we can reduce the severity of them or eliminate them all together.

As identified in the statistics, 77.2% of the injuries occurred in the tackle. Of these 42.2% were injuries inflicted on the person carrying out the tackle itself. This indicates that there is technique at fault and a complete session of correct tackling would be recommended for all teams at all grades and levels within Rugby League should be undertaken, not just once but repeatedly throughout the season. An idea would be to modify how the Mini and Mods play out their tackling training and start each season with the first four or five games as a two handed touch tackle around the waist to reinforce the initial technique. This could be further reinforced in the young teenage players as a pre-season style of Rugby League to again reinforce the tackling technique while promoting the fitness component of the game.

The other 56.6% of the injuries in the tackles occurred to the person being tackled and this may be in the

What's in your sports drink?

In this two part series many of the well known "sports drinks" are compared with the Unipro Endura sports rehydration supplement.

Part 1

The Importance of Magnesium.

Ready made "sports drinks" are very popular with many Footballers but they can do more harm than good. In the first of this two part series we look at the importance of magnesium in the rehydration process. Endura with its patented magnesium formulation Meta Mag™ delivers the levels of magnesium needed for rehydration and improved performance.

The Problem with most sports drinks.

Most sports drinks are high in sodium, without the balance of other intra-cellular electrolytes to maintain muscle cell water levels. Replacing sodium levels in the blood lost through exercise helps maintain sweating rate, but it also has the negative effect of causing muscle cell dehydration and a loss of muscular performance.

So while most commercial sports drinks have concentrated on providing energy and replacing the sodium and potassium lost in sweat, they have completely ignored the most fundamental aspects of muscle physiology and energy metabolism.

Without doubt, the most important mineral for the maintenance of muscle function and energy production is **magnesium**. It plays a vital role in muscular energy (ATP) production. Magnesium deficiency causes swelling and disruption of the main energy-producing structures within the cells (the mitochondria). This is a major cause of exercise-induced muscle damage, and can be prevented by magnesium supplementation.

Magnesium Replacement

Athletes often experience intracellular magnesium deficiency due to inadequate dietary intake and increased losses through sweat and urine during exercise.

A recent study performed on 20 highly trained men who took 72 hours to complete a 120km hike in temperatures of 20-26C, showed that their magnesium levels took

three months to return to pre-exercise levels.

This study indicates how strenuous muscular activity depletes magnesium reserves and the difficulty of restoring magnesium in training athletes. (Doley E, Burstein R, Wishnitzer R, Lubin F, Chetriet A, Shefi M, Deuster PA. *Longitudinal study of magnesium status of Israeli military recruits. Magnes Trace Elem* 1991-1992;10:420-426.)

Magnesium therapy in athletes has been shown to have an oxygen sparing effect, increasing the clearance of lactic acid, muscle strength and power output, and also improving performance and preventing muscle spasm and cramping.

*(Kappes P, Nowacki P, Golf S, Graef V, Temme H, Katz N. *Cardiorespiratory and metabolic performance of competitive female endurance athletes after long term magnesium supplementation in a double blind study. 15th Symposium der Gesseschaft fur Magnesium forschung September 1992*)*

Dietary surveys indicate that the majority of people are not ingesting the required daily amount (RDA) of magnesium. While the typical Australian diet produces 1/2-2/3 of the RDA (400 mg) of magnesium, it actually raises magnesium requirements to 500-800 mg due to its high content of magnesium-depleting factors. (Webb WL, Gehi M. *Electrolyte and fluid imbalance: neuropsychiatric manifestations. Psychosomatics* 1981;22:1991-1203)

Both alcohol and caffeine cause urinary increases in magnesium excretion, and high levels of fat have been shown to interfere with magnesium absorption. Increased phosphorous intake (e.g. the phosphoric acid in cola drinks) can cause an increased need for magnesium, as does a high sugar, salt, protein and fibre intake.

Rugby League Coach Found Guilty of "A Salt"

Could this be you?

If you let your players use many of the popular "sports drinks" it probably is. Because without magnesium and the proper ratio of electrolytes, many of the "sports drinks" that Rugby League Players use are nothing more than sweetened salt water.

Only sports drinks like Endura, with its scientifically advanced formulation, provide the high levels of magnesium and proper ratios of electrolytes that football players need for prolonged endurance and muscle recovery.

Containing the active minerals: magnesium, calcium, potassium and sodium, Endura rehydrates the body quickly and helps relieve muscle cramping and soreness.

Don't be found guilty of "A Salt", check out how much salt (Sodium) is in your "sports drink".

And use Endura!

Endura is available from all good Pharmacies and Health Food Stores or contact Health World Limited directly on (07) 3260 3300 for your nearest stockists.

Always read the label.

**Contains High
Concentrations of
Magnesium**

Improve Your Results

Health World wants you to achieve your best. That's why, for a limited time* only, you can get the Endura Sports Pack for the Special Introductory Price of \$24.95 (inc. GST). That's:

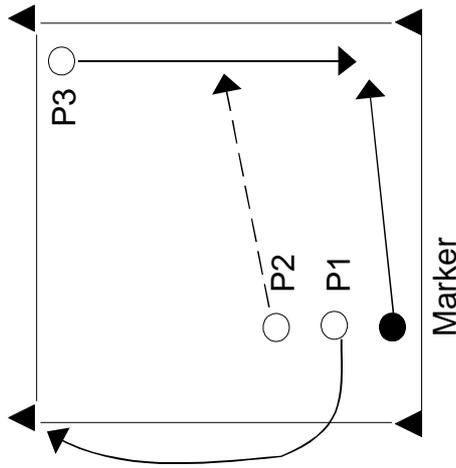
- A Tub of Endura,
- An Endura Sports Drink Bottle,
- An Endura Sports Booklet,
- Free Delivery anywhere in Australia,
- And the name of your nearest stockist for when you want more.

To take advantage of this special introductory offer, just call Health World on (07) 3260 3300 and talk to one of our customer service operators about the Endura Sports Pack.

*Limit one per customer.

**Endura Sports Pack
Only \$24.95
Save \$\$\$**

Continuous Marker



Setting

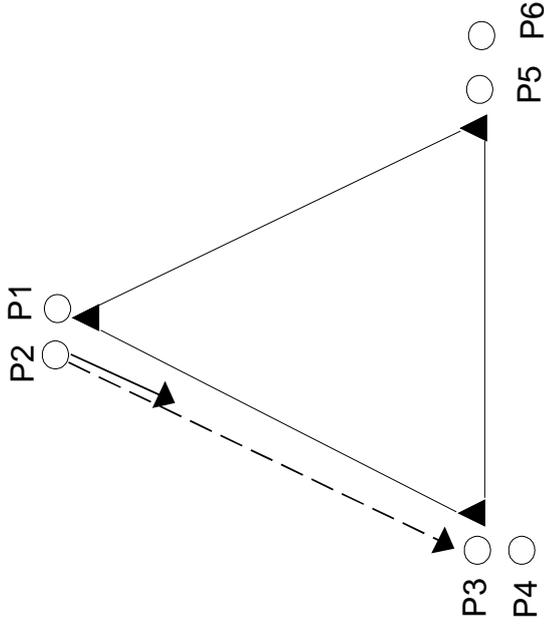
4 Players
Grid 8m x 8m

- P1 PTB to P2
- (Once P1 PTB he moves to become the runner to receive the return pass after the next PTB)
- P2 passes to P3
- Marker chases and attempts to tackle player P3
- P3 PTB to P2 who passes back to P1
- Marker once again chases and attempts tackle
- Drill continues back and forth across grid

Variations

Decrease or increase the size of the grid for skill level or specific passes.
Increase speed of drill for higher intensity.
Create game points for dropped ball, tackle count in time limit, etc

Continuous Play The Ball



Setting

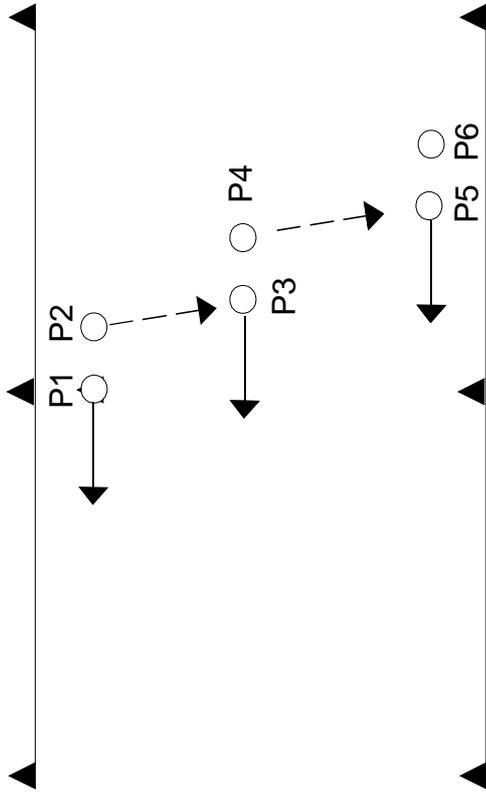
6 Players
Triangle begin 5m x 5m, advance to 10m x 10m

- P1 PTB to P2 who passes to P3
- P2 follows ball
- P3 PTB to P4 who passes to P5
- P4 follows ball
- P5 PTB to P6 who passes to P1
- P1 follows ball
- Swap players positions after several rotations

Variations

Reverse ball movement.
Increase triangle size to include longer and spiral passes.

6 Man PTB Routine



Setting

6 Players

20 metre channel, Field Length

- P1 starts movement by running forward then going to ground
- P1 PTB to P2 who passes to P3
- P3 goes to ground, PTB to P4 who passes to P5
- P5 goes to ground, PTB to P6 who passes ball back to P3
- Drill continues back and forth
- Players change roles with next run through.

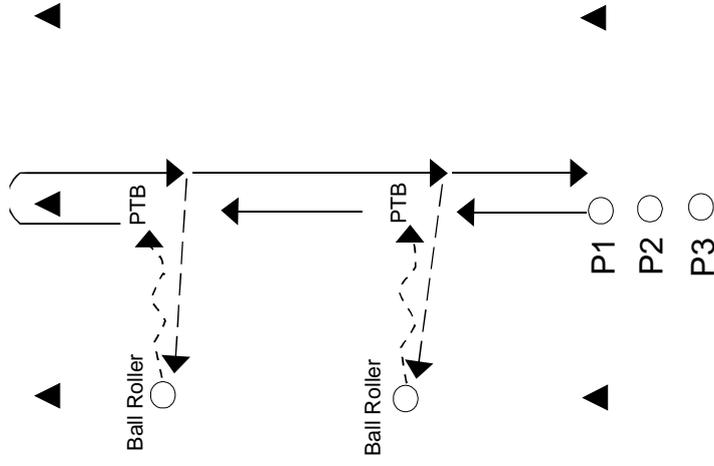
Variations

Add markers and defensive line, moving up and back 10 metres.

Coach varies commands as to which player receives ball.

Use all players for the development and exposure to Dummy Halfs role.

Play The Ball (1)



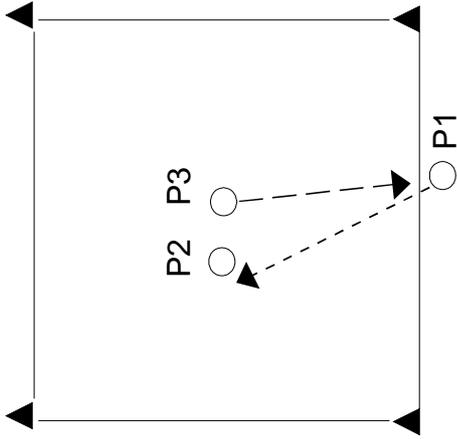
Setting

5 Players to 1 group - 3 runners, 2 ball rollers

Grid approx 15 m X 10 m

- 2 ball rollers stand 5m apart on the long side of the grid
- The remaining players line up in single file at the end
- The first ball is rolled in front of P1
- P1 regathers ball, goes to ground, regains feet and PTB
- The second ball is then rolled for P1
- P1 regathers, goes the ground, regains feet and PTB
- P1 continues to end of grid, runs around marker and returns
- On return P1 passes the ball from the ground to the ball rollers
- Drill then continues for P2

Play The Ball (2)



Setting

3 Players

Grid approx 15 m X 10 m

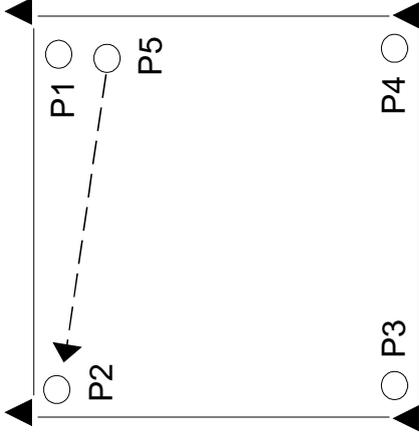
- P1 is positioned on side of grid
- P1 rolls ball to the centre of grid
- P2 regathers ball, goes to ground, regains feet and PTB to P3
- P3 passes ball to P1
- P1 rolls ball back into grid for drill to continue
- Players swap positions

Variations

Add Markers to chase dummy half pass.

Add Player opposite P1 (pass of both sides, test markers)

Play The Ball Grid (1)



Setting

5 Players

Grid approx 8 m X 8 m

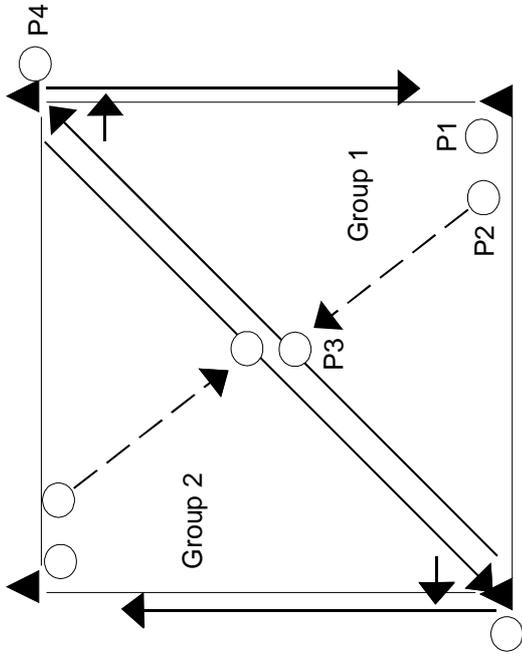
- 1 Player on each corner plus 1 Dummy Half
- P1 PTB to P5 who passes to P2
- P5 follows pass
- P2 then PTB to P5 who passes to P3
- P3 follows the ball and the drill continues around the grid
- Players swap positions after several rotations

Variations

Change direction of passing.

Vary size of grid for longer and spiral passes.

Play The Ball Grid (2)



Setting

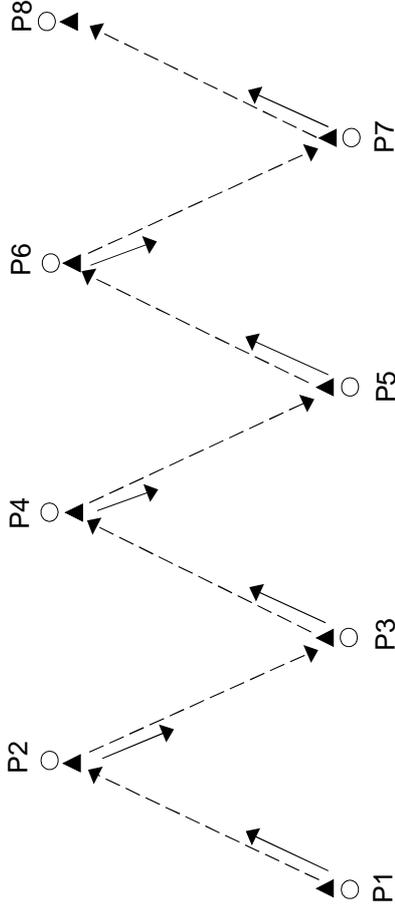
8 Players in 2 groups
Grid approx 10 m X 10 m

- P1 PTB to P2
- P2 passes the ball to P3 who is running diagonally across grid
- As P3 approaches corner he pops a pass to P4
- P4 then runs the ball to the starting corner and PTB to P1 who has now become the Dummy Half
- Once P2 has passed the ball he moves to the adjacent corner to be in position to receive the ball from P1
- Have 2 groups operating in the 1 grid

Variations

P3 runs in the second groups triangle to create more traffic.

Zig Zag Dummy Half Passing (1)



Setting

1 Passer, 5-6 Receivers
Grid approx 30m x 8m channel

- P1 passes the ball from the ground to P2
- P1 then follows the ball
- P2 PTB for P1 who passes to P3
- P1 follows the ball
- P3 PTB for P1, who passes to P4
- The drill continues with P1 acting as Dummy Half and alternating which side the ball is passed from with each play

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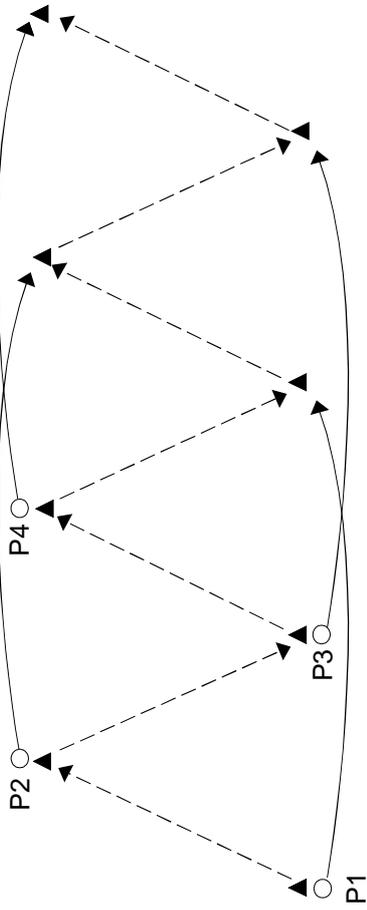




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Zig Zag Dummy Half Passing (2)



Setting

4 Players

Channel 8m wide

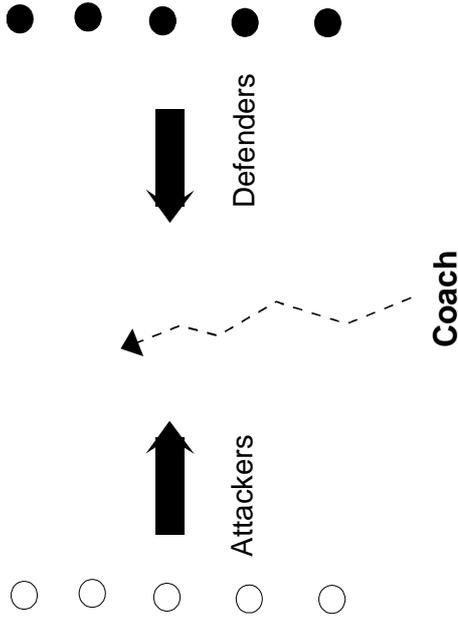
- P1 passes the ball from the ground to P2
- P2 receives ball, places on ground, releases and then passes to P3
- P3 receives ball, places on ground, releases and then passes to P4
- P4 continues drill down the channel
- Once player has passed the ball he moves quickly to the next allocated position on his side of the channel

Variations

Players run through the middle of channel to the allocated position creating traffic and distractions.

Players run through middle of channel as well as swapping sides.

Secure & Play



Setting

2 groups of 5 players

Grid approx 20 m X 20 m

- Coach rolls ball into the centre of grid and nominates which group is to regather ball and become attackers, with the other group becoming defenders
- Attacking team regather and start their attack by Playing The Ball
- Defending team line up respectively on attacking players with Markers defending the ruck area
- Aim is to have dummy half passing correctly and players to reach advantage line

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